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*Address of
Charles L. Brown*

*County
Donegal*

January 23, 1917





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ADDRESS
OF
CHARLES L. BROWN
PRESIDENT JUDGE MUNICIPAL COURT



COUNTY DONEGAL



JANUARY 23, 1917

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ADDRESS

I feel that I have a right to address the members of the Donegal Society. My father was born at a place called Churchhill in Donegal, of parents who were born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and who after their marriage took up their residence at Donegal. My great grandfather, who is buried in a Presbyterian Churchyard in Edinburgh, was the father of eight sons, four of whom died in the Crimean War. My grandmother was a Logan of the family who came over with William Penn and when she and my grandfather came to Philadelphia, they located on a farm and nursery property at a place now called in Philadelphia—"Logan."

In the extreme northwestern corner of Ireland lies the County of Donegal, whose name, according to antiquarians, signifies "the Fortress of the Foreigner," ostensibly alluding to the early Danish invasion. But under its ancient name of "Tyrconnel," it was and still is the *most* Irish of all the counties in Ireland.

County Donegal, the last to succumb to the prowess of the Anglo-Saxon invader, and, as the home of Saint Columba, the "Dove of the Church"; and Red Hugh O'Donnell, the "Sword of Ulster," occupies the most glorious pages of Irish history, beside those of Saint Patrick and Brian Boru.

Writers who have traveled Donegal say it abounds with native Irish hospitality and civility; that it is rich in legendary lore, and that nowhere else in Erin does "The Irish" so generally prevail and nowhere is the dialect so pure.

Though the soil is stubborn and reluctantly yields to the cultivation by man, and though the landlord and tenant laws have unfortunately operated against the humble tenant, often depriving him of the means of livelihood, so that in the summer season he is compelled to seek employment in the fields

of Scotland and England, nature, as if to atone for her deficiency, has created the most beautiful scenery, perhaps, in the world.

A grand coast-line from Lough Foyle to Donegal Bay, dotted with charming loughs and land-locked bays; lined with massive cliffs of varied colors, where sunshine and shadows alternately chase each other; a country dotted with attractive hamlets and ancient ruins; a people—clean, healthy, witty and free from guile—have made this garden spot a favorite resort for those seeking healthy recreation and beautiful scenery.

It is conceded that the population of Donegal decreases less than any other county in Ireland, and it is a matter of repute that the emigrant from Donegal never loses the recollection of his home; but that his heart is there—no matter where he roam.

At the station of Saint Columba, above Lough Akibbon, there is a graveyard where Protestant and Catholic repose together. Says Stephen Gwynn, in his charming "Highways and By-ways of Donegal,"—"They sleep there quiet and wholesome on the green hillside, with the lovely Lake below them. In the very centre stands a new and conspicuous monument. Some one in Wilmington, U. S. A., erected it in memory of his parents—natives of the parish. There you have the very spirit of this country. Hard and stubborn as the soil is, ungrateful to the tillers of it, it breeds a strong race. They go out over the seas and win a prosperity impossible in their homes, but you shall scarcely hear of one who does not send back constant remittances to the old people. Gray stones, brown moors and blue water make a living image forever in their hearts, and it pleases them (if they cannot be there to close the eyes of those they love) to erect some memorial that shall link their names to the home they have not forgotten."

How beautifully the poet of Donegal, William Allingham, has put it in "The Winding Banks of Erne." Says he:

"Adieu to Ballyshannon, where I was bred and born;
Go where I may, I'll think of you as sure as night and morn.
The kindly spot, the friendly town, where everyone is known;
And not a face in all the place, but partly seems my own.
There's not a house or window; there's not a field or hill
But east or west, in foreign lands, I'll recollect them still!

I leave my warm heart with you, though my back I'm forced
to turn.

So, adieu to Ballyshannon and the winding banks of Erne.

If ever I'm a moneyed man, I mean, please God, to cast
My golden anchor in the place where youthful years were
passed;

Though heads that now are black and brown, must mean-
while gather gray—

New faces rise by every hearth, and old ones drop away;

Yet dearer still that Irish hill than all the world beside;

It's Home, Sweet Home, where'er I roam through lands and
waters wide;

And if the Lord allows me, I surely will return

To my native Ballyshannon and the winding banks of Erne!"

The Donegal man, though it has been centuries since "The Sword of Ulster" was broken at the disastrous Battle of Kinsale, has inherited the fighting qualities of his ancestors. Gwynn relates the story of a girl describing a wedding she had attended at Dunfanaghy. The girl was jubilant. The bride, like herself, was a "McGettigan"; the groom was a "McGettigan," and they had each brought fifty "McGettigans" to the wedding. First, they danced; and then they sang; then they fought! And, oh, it was a grand wedding," exclaimed the ecstatic girl.

As a matter of fact, the greatest fighters in Ireland were the stout Ulster ancestors of the Donegal men. To this day is remembered the mighty prowess of the O'Donnell, with his Gallowglasses; of the Maguires; the O'Gallaghers; the McDevitts; the Kavanaghs; the O'Doghertys; the O'Hanlons; and the McLoons, and the McSwinneys.

Old Godfrey O'Donnell and his famous descendant, "Red Hugh," called "The Sword of Ulster," fought for their country and for their right to till the soil and own their homes. They were of the Race of Conn, which had produced the great Saint Columba, who, next to Saint Patrick, was Premier Saint of Ireland, and who had spread the gospel throughout Britain.

It is related of Old Godfrey O'Donnell that, in his last battle with the O'Neill, as he lay dying on a litter he insisted upon being borne into the thick of the fray. Around the litter raged the conflict, until the O'Neill, beaten, retired from

the field. Then the triumphant Conals bore the dying conqueror along the beautiful Swilley into the Street of Conwall, where his soul departed amid the shouts of victory:

“And proud and high Tyrconnell shouts, but blending on the gale;

Upon the ear ascendeth a sad and sullen wail;
For on that field, as back they bore, from chasing of the foe,
The spirit of O'Donnell fled,—oh, woe to Ulster—woe.
Yet died he there all gloriously, a victor in the fight;
A Chieftain at his peoples' head, a warrior in his might;
They dug him there a fitting grave upon that field of pride,
And a lofty cairn they raised above, by Fair Lough Swilley's side!”

It was this fearless courage that made the shouts of “O'Donnell Aboo” so terrible to the Saxon invader. For ten years, upon many hard fought fields, Red Hugh, “The Sword of Ulster,” and The O'Neill, the “Red Hand of Tyrone,” beat back the hated Sassenach. At the Yellow Ford, at Ballyshannon, at the Blackwater, and wherever the Saxon could be found, Red Hugh and his Gallowglasses gave them no rest.

The greatest English commanders, Lord De Burgh, Earl of Kildare, Marshall Bagnal, General Norris, Sir Conyers Clifford, were beaten and left dead upon the field, and even the Great Essex, the favorite of Queen Elizabeth, was so badly worsted, that his Royal Mistress, in mortification, sent him to the block of the executioner.

But even Red Hugh was at last defeated; the “Sword of Ulster” was broken, and Red Hugh died in a foreign land—the victim of a hired poisoner.

Donegal has always been true to her Irish principles, and she has been in sympathy with every movement for the elevation of the people. When the late Michael Davitt organized the Land League, Donegal was in the grip of the land grabber, and she opened her heart to the unselfish patriot, and, although not to the manner born, enshrined him with her other heroes, the “Sword of Ulster,” and the “Dove of the Church.”

And so, in Donegal they revere the memory of Saint Columba, because he fortified Christianity and spread the gospel; of Red Hugh O'Donnell, because he was Irish of the Irish, and relentlessly opposed the Sassenach; and of Michael Davitt, because he loved the people and devoted his life and

his freedom to ameliorating the condition of his fellowmen. The love of the Donegal people for Michael Davitt is attested by Sheehy Skeffington in his "Life of Davitt," and by Wilfrid Seawen Blunt, in his "Land War in Ireland." Michael Davitt's mother is buried in Manayunk, Philadelphia. In his will he provided for interment in her grave, should he die in America. He died in Ireland, however, and was buried in his native County Mayo.

Skeffington calls him the greatest Irishman of the nineteenth century, and Justin McCarthy compares him to the Abou Ben Adhem "as one who loved his fellowman."

Thus, throughout the length and breadth of the county, from Donegal Castle of the O'Donnells to Greenan-Ely, the palace of the Ancient Kings of Ulster; from Lough Swilley to Lough Foyle; from the Fairy bridge of Bundoran to McSwinneys' Gun (McSwinneys' Gun is a show spot of Donegal. It is a large hole in the top of a cave. When the sea beats in, it forces a stream of water and rocks through the hole in the cave to a height of 100 feet, with a roar that can be heard for miles); from Malin Head to Slieve League; from top to bottom and clear across—may the good people of Donegal—there—here and everywhere—get what they deserve—the reward of a virtuous life; industrious life; industrious habits and intense love of the traditions of their race. Good luck, and plenty of it, and may her native soil respond to cultivation until Donegal is as prosperous as she is beautiful!

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